

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMHERST SCHOOLS
Fiscal Year 2002

Amherst School Committee

Sandra Berkowitz, Chair

Elaine Brighty, Vice-Chair

Tony Rogers, Secretary

Barbara Love

Vladimir Morales

The Amherst School Committee is an elected committee responsible for the public education of all children in kindergarten through grade six and of pre-school children with substantial special needs in our community. The Committee meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month and welcomes citizen participation at each meeting. The members of this committee also serve as Amherst's members of the Regional School Committee, which has responsibility for the educational programs for children in grades seven through twelve.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Student Enrollment as of October 1, 2001 was:

GRADE	STUDENTS
Pre K	62
K	191
1	198
2	197
3	214
4	209
5	238
6	<u>230</u>
TOTAL	1,539

Enrollments for 2001-2002 were 49 less than the previous year. Seven children from Amherst attended other school districts under the School Choice program.

Principal goals for the Amherst Schools are as follows:

1. developing and maintaining an up-to-date, innovative, multicultural, academically challenging curriculum that promotes high standards and success for all students
2. providing creative, multi-faceted instruction that maintains high standards, engages all students, and enables all students to be successful learners

3. making all students feel fully welcome and a part of our schools, regardless of race, class, gender, language, religion, sexuality, culture, academic success, or physical abilities
4. eliminating the achievement gap among students from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds
5. addressing the demands and opportunities facing our schools as a result of the rapid growth in the use of technology throughout our society
6. increasing communication and collaboration among the district's stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the larger community – and using parents and the community more effectively as educational resources
7. hiring and retaining a high quality teaching and administrative staff
8. equipping and maintaining school buildings to provide healthy, accessible, modern learning environments that support the achievement of our mission
9. sustaining a physically and emotionally safe environment in our schools for students and staff.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

This was the thirteenth full year of leadership by Superintendent Dr. Gus A. Sayer. Principal activities during the 2001-2002 school year included the following:

- Meetings were scheduled with the staffs of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury elementary schools to work on K-6 curriculum coordination. Grades 5 and 6 teachers attended a regional curriculum day workshop in January.
- Renovations to Mark's Meadow and Crocker Farm Elementary Schools began in July 2001. The project at Crocker Farm School includes both renovation and expansion and is expected to be completed in the fall of 2002. The focus of renovation at Mark's Meadow was the electrical system, including replacement and upgrade of electrical panels and installation of a new alarm system and intercom. Since the Mark's Meadow building is state property, the work was carried out by UMass and was to be completed in the fall of 2002.
- In response to the recommendations of the BAMSS Steering Committee, school-based diversity committees were organized in each building and staff development workshops dealing with anti-racist education continued to be offered to staff of the district.
- Because there was an identified increase in the number of non-English-proficient children of Korean descent in the elementary schools during the school year, a TBE Korean program was established at Mark's Meadow School at a cost of approximately \$40,000, serving 25 Korean-speaking students.
- The position of Elementary Curriculum Director was restructured and is now known as the Executive Director of Elementary Curriculum.

- The Executive Director will serve as Interim Superintendent for the Amherst district in the absence of the Superintendent.
- The new mathematics coordinator, Amy Wolpin, began reviewing and updating curriculum and working with classroom teachers to help them learn how to better meet the range of students' abilities in math. More focus was placed on developing the algebra skills of students in Grades K-6. Long- and short-term plans for continuous student improvement in mathematics were developed. Because MCAS scores in math were lower than expected, Ms. Wolpin will work to identify changes in the curriculum that are expected to improve children's performance.
- In Special Education, a Language Learning Disabled program was initiated, and the Assistive Technology Center, initiated in 2000-01, became a model for other districts.
- In response to declining enrollments (at a rate of approximately 3% per year), the number of elementary classrooms projected for FY 03 will be reduced by 5.
- The School Committee voted to make the East Street School available to the Regional School Committee beginning with the 2003-04 school year. It is anticipated that the building will be used for an alternative special education program.
- Because of the costs associated with initiating and sustaining a Spanish language program at the elementary school, the Amherst School Committee decided to eliminate the position of Spanish Language Coordinator for the FY 03 school year and not to pursue Spanish language instruction for students.
- The Wildwood Elementary Playground Committee initiated a fundraising campaign and completed construction of a new playground for the school.
- Two members of the School Committee, Elaine Brighty and Vladimir Morales, served on the Amherst Joint Capital Planning Committee.